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TO MAKE A HERO . . . . . Randall Garrett 70

**Novelet:**

WELCOME HOME . . . . . Dean McLaughlin 17

**Stories:**

THE LAST MAN LEFT IN THE BAR . . . . .	C. M. Kornbluth	4
DR. VICKERS' CAR . . . . .	Edward Wellen	43
DEATH SCENE . . . . .	Clifford D. Simak	48
THE ENEMY . . . . .	Richard Wilson	67
SECOND CENSUS . . . . .	John Victor Peterson	110

**Infinity-plus:**

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY (Concluded)

3 stories of how man will take  
his first big step into space . . . . Arthur C. Clarke 55

**Departments:**

INFINITY'S CHOICE . . . . .	Damon Knight	104
BY THE EDITOR . . . . .		123
FEEDBACK . . . . .	The Readers	125

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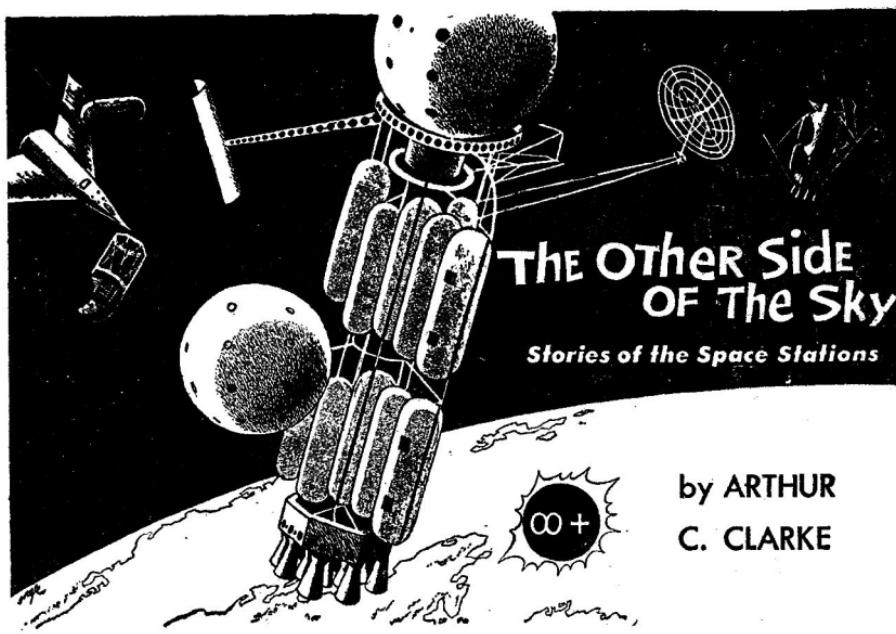
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## THE OTHER SIDE OF The Sky

*Stories of the Space Stations*

by ARTHUR  
C. CLARKE

**an Infinity-plus feature**

*The space stations will, we have often heard, serve as stepping stones on our journey into space. But it takes a writer of the caliber of Arthur C. Clarke to show exactly how it will happen. In the last three stories of a complete set of six, presented on the following pages, he shows us both the human and the scientific aspects of this great adventure.*





# The Call Of The Stars

*When the moon ships are  
launched, the greatest  
heroes may be those who  
have to stay behind*

DOWN THERE on Earth the Twentieth Century is dying. As I look across at the shadowed globe blocking the stars, I can see the lights of a hundred sleepless cities, and there are moments when I wish that I could be among the crowds now surging and singing in the streets of London, Cape-town, Rome, Paris, Berlin, Madrid. . . . Yes, I can see them all at a single glance, burning

like fireflies against the darkened planet. The line of midnight is now bisecting Europe: in the eastern Mediterranean a tiny, brilliant star is pulsing as some exuberant pleasure ship waves her searchlights to the sky. I think she is deliberately aiming at us; for the past few minutes the flashes have been quite regular and startlingly bright. Presently I'll call communications center and find out who she is,

so that I can radio back our own greetings.

Passing into history now, receding forever down the stream of time, is the most incredible hundred years the world has ever seen. It opened with the conquest of the air, saw at its mid-point the unlocking of the atom—and now ends with the bridging of space.

(For the past five minutes I've been wondering what's happening to Nairobi; now I realize that they are putting on a mammoth fireworks display. Chemically-fueled rockets may be obsolete out here—but they're still using lots of them down on Earth tonight.)

The end of a century—and the end of a millennium. What will the hundred years that begin with Two and Zero bring? The planets, of course; floating there in space, only a mile away, are the ships of the First Martian Expedition. For two years I have watched them grow, assembled piece by piece, as the space station itself was built by the men I worked with a generation ago.

Those ten ships are ready now, with all their crews aboard, waiting for the final instrument check and the signal for departure. Before the first day of the new century has passed its noon, they will be tearing free from the reins of Earth, to head out towards the strange world which

may one day be Man's second home.

As I look at the brave little fleet which is now preparing to challenge infinity, my mind goes back forty years, to the days when the first satellites were launched and the moon still seemed very far away. And I remember—indeed, I have never forgotten—my father's fight to keep me down on Earth.

There were not many weapons he had failed to use. Ridicule had been the first: "Of course they can do it," he had sneered, "but what's the point? Who wants to go out into space while there's so much to be done here on Earth? There's not a single planet in the Solar System where men can live. The moon's a burnt-out slag-heap, and everywhere else is even worse. *This* is where we were meant to live."

Even then (I must have been eighteen or so at the time) I could tangle him up in points of logic. I can remember answering, "How do you know where we were meant to live, Dad? After all, we were in the sea for about a billion years before we decided to tackle the land. Now we're making the next big jump: I don't know where it will lead—nor did that first fish when it crawled up on the beach and started to sniff the air."

So when he couldn't out-argue

me, he had tried subtler pressures. He was always talking about the dangers of space-travel, and the short working life of anyone foolish enough to get involved in rocketry. At that time, people were still scared of meteors and cosmic rays; like the "Here Be Dragons" of the old map-makers, they were the mythical monsters on the still-blank celestial charts. But they didn't worry me; if anything, they added the spice of danger to my dreams.

While I was going through college, Father was comparatively quiet. My training would be valuable whatever profession I took up in later life, so he could not complain—though he occasionally grumbled about the money I wasted buying all the books and magazines on aeronautics that I could find. My college record was good, which naturally pleased him; perhaps he did not realize that it would also help me to get my way.

All through my final year I had avoided talking of my plans. I had even given the impression (though I am sorry for that now) that I had abandoned my dream of going into space. Without saying anything to him, I put in my application to Astro-tech, and was accepted as soon as I had graduated.

The storm broke when that long blue envelope with the

embossed heading, "Institute of Astronautical Technology" dropped into the mail-box. I was accused of deceit and ingratitude, and I do not think I ever forgave my father for destroying the pleasure I should have felt at being chosen for the most exclusive—and most glamorous—apprenticeship the world has ever known.

The vacations were an ordeal; had it not been for Mother's sake, I do not think I would have gone home more than once a year, and I always left again as quickly as I could. I had hoped that he would mellow as my training progressed and he accepted the inevitable, but he never did.

Then had come that stiff and awkward parting at the space-port, with the rain streaming down from leaden skies and beating against the smooth walls of the ship that seemed so eagerly waiting to climb into the eternal sunlight beyond the reach of storms. I know now what it cost my father to watch the machine he hated swallow up his only son: for I understand many things today that were hidden from me then.

He knew, even as we parted at the ship, that he would never see me again. Yet his old, stubborn pride kept him from saying the only words that might have held me back. I knew that

he was ill, but how ill, he had told no one. That was the only weapon he had not used against me, and I respect him for it.

WOULD I have stayed, had I known? It is even more futile to speculate about the unchangeable past than the unforeseeable future; all I can say now is that I am glad I never had to make the choice. At the end he let me go; he gave up his fight against my ambition, and a little while later he gave up his fight with death.

So I said goodbye to Earth, and to the father who loved me but knew no way to say it. He lies down there on the planet I can cover with my hand; how strange it is to think that, of the countless billion human beings whose blood runs in my veins, I was the very first to leave his native world. . . .

The new day is breaking over

Asia; a hairline of fire is rimming the eastern edge of Earth. Soon it will grow into a burning crescent as the sun comes up out of the Pacific—yet Europe is preparing for sleep, except for those revellers who will stay up to greet the dawn.

And now, over there by the flagship, the ferry rocket is coming back for the last visitors from the station. Here comes the message I have been waiting for: "Captain Stevens presents his compliments to the Station Commander. Blast-off will be in ninety minutes; he will be glad to see you aboard now."

Well, Father, now I know how you felt: time has gone full circle. Yet I hope that I have learned from the mistakes we both made, long ago. I shall remember you, when I go over there to the flagship *Starfire*, and say goodbye to the grandson you never knew.

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